



BOARD OF YAKIMA COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

★ District One
Michael D. Leita

★ District Two
Kevin J. Bouchey

★ District Three
Rand Elliott

March 20, 2013

Mr. David Danner
Executive Director and Secretary
Washington State utilities and Transportation Commission
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

**SUBJECT: Stevens Road and Barnhart Crossing Closure Petitions (Cases 121647 & 121648);
Withdrawal of Petitions**

Dear Mr. Danner:

The Board of Yakima County Commissioners has received a number of objections from our constituents regarding the proposed crossing closures at Stevens Road and Barnhart Road on the BNSF Inc mainline railroad. In addition, we have reviewed the comments forwarded to us by Ms. Kathy Hunter of your office. Based on the comments received, we wish to formally withdraw the above captioned petitions.

We understand that the goal of the crossing closures is to improve safety at railroad grade crossings. However, while the vehicle usage at the two crossings is relatively low, the crossings are used by local farmers to move farm implements. These implements are very slow moving and have to travel on the shoulders of State Route 22 and other public roads. The increased travel distance, resulting from the closures, on public highways varies from a minimum of 1.5 miles to almost 4 miles. State Route 22 is a 55 MPH Highway and we believe that the closures will increase the potential for accidents as a result of the conflicts between the farm traffic and highway traffic. Our concern is that the relatively small safety benefit from closing the railroad crossings will result in a much greater decrease in safety along the public highways.

In addition, the Board of Yakima County Commissioners, for the reasons stated above, will oppose any future petitions for these crossing to be closed. We would like to thank you for your time and effort on this matter. If you require any additional information, please contact Gary Ekstedt, Yakima County Engineer at (509) 574-2300.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Leita, Chairman

Kevin J. Bouchey, Commissioner

J. Rand Elliott, Commissioner

cc: Public Services
Rick Wagner – BNSF Railway, Inc.

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